

4.2.2 Plant pests

4.2.2.1 Aphids

Aphids can be different colours, including black, brown, grey, green and light yellow. They suck plant sap and reproduce very quickly. The loss of sap causes the plants to become weak and aphids also transmit viral infections and excrete honey dew, which makes the leaves sticky and turn black due to soot mould infection. Aphids can be removed manually or by using a biological insecticide administered through the irrigation system.

4.2.2.2 Mealybug

Mealybugs (*Pseudococcus*, *Planococcus*) are oval shaped, white, 0.5 cm large, wingless and covered with a woolly white wax which protects them from water and contact insecticide. They appear on the leaf axis as a white fluffy substance. They suck plant sap and excrete honey dew. Mealybug can be treated by using a biological insecticide administered through the irrigation system.



Figure 1: Mealybug
Source: Sabina Šegula

4.2.2.3 Scale insects

Scale insects include species such as *Coccus hesperidum*, *Lepidosaphes ulmi*, and *Pulvinaria regalis*. Scale insects are mostly brown-yellow in colour and settle in the less accessible parts of the plant. The plant's leaves become sticky due to the honey dew they secrete. A symptom of scale insect infection is usually black soot (the leaves turn black). The young larvae are moving but the older animals are immobile, and they suck the plant sap under the protective cap. Scale insects can be treated by using a biological insecticide administered through the irrigation system.



Figure 2: Scale insects;
Source: Sabina Šegula

4.2.2.4 Mites

These tiny animals need heat and dry air to survive. Barely visible to the naked eye, they make cobweb coatings, suck plant sap and cause the leaves of the plant to become speckled and eventually fall off. Among the many species of mite, the most common is the red spider mite (*Tetranychus urticae*). Sufficient humidity limits the development of mites. A biological insecticide can be administered through the irrigation system.



Figure 3: The tiny white spots visible on the upper side of the leaf are the result of a mite infection
Source: Sabina Šegula

4.2.2.5 Leaf miners

Leaf miners are the larvae of small flies. They eat the tissue between the leaf's upper and lower epidermis making hollow tunnels in the leaves. They destroy much of the lamina in a short period of

time. The damaged leaves should be removed. Spray the entire plant with a systemic insecticide. A biological insecticide can be administered through the irrigation system.

4.2.2.6 Thrips

Thrips are brownish insects with a narrow body of up to 2 mm in length, sometimes crossed by pale bands. The young larvae are yellow-orange in colour, up to 1 mm in length and feed as adult animals on the upper side of the leaves. They thrive in hot and dry conditions. When thrips feed on plants, the upper surface of the leaves turns silvery-white and white spots appear on the petals. In cases of severe infection, the loss of flower pigmentation is more pronounced, the buds fall off and the leaves are badly damaged. Species of thrips that might be found on living walls include:

- Banded palm thrips (*Parthenothrips dracaenae*) which occurs all year round on various houseplants, especially those with relatively tough leaves such as *Ficus*, *Dracaena*, *Citrus*, *Monstera*, and *Schefflera*.
- Western flower thrips (*Frankliniella occidentalis*) attacks the foliage and/or flowers of many houseplants, especially *Streptocarpus*, *Saintpaulia*, *Fuchsia*, *Gloxinia*, *Achimenes*, *Pelargonium*, *Cyclamen*, *Chrysanthemum*, *Verbena*, and *Impatiens*.
- Onion thrips (*Thrips tabaci*) attacks a wide range of garden plants, including *Dianthus*, *Chrysanthemum*, *Begonia*, *Cyclamen*, and *Dahlia*.

A biological insecticide can be administered through the irrigation system. Further infections can be avoided by keeping the plants regularly watered and by maintaining a moist environment.

4.2.2.7 Snails

If not noticed in time, snails can eat away at the leaves and the plants lose their aesthetic value. Holes appear in the leaves and the stems may be peeled away. There can be traces of silvery slime seen on the surface of the plant. Due to the higher levels of moisture in the air, they only eat at night. The snails should be removed by hand.



Figure 4: A leaf eaten by snails.
Source: Sabina Šegula

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